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**Twenty-Five Years**

of

**Psychical  
Experiences**



**W. J. Colville**



# TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF PSYCHICAL EXPERIENCES.

W. J. COLVILLE.

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# TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF PSYCHICAL EXPERIENCES.

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The twenty-fifth anniversary of my first introduction to public life having occurred on the 4th of this present month, I have been particularly requested to give some definite account of my connection with psychic problems during a quarter of a century. If I am to relate faithfully, even in barest outline, my experiences with 'unseen helpers,' I must go back to my very early childhood, when my 'mediumship' originally declared itself. I was practically an orphan from birth. My mother passed to spirit life in my infancy and my father was called by important business to travel in lands remote from England, where I was left in charge of a guardian. My childhood was singularly unchildlike, as I was separated from children altogether, and compelled to associate exclusively with persons of thoroughly mature age.

How I first came to see my mother clairvoyantly I do not know, but I distinctly remember becoming vividly conscious at frequent intervals of the gentle, loving presence of a beautiful young woman, who invariably appeared to my vision gracefully attired in light garments of singular beauty. The head of this charming lady was adorned with golden ringlets; her eyes were intensely blue; she was tall and of rather slender build, and manifested many attributes of almost ideal womanhood. I cannot recall to mind any occasion when this lady spoke to me as one ordinary human being on earth converses

with another, but I distinctly recollect that when I saw her most plainly and felt her presence most distinctly, I was intensely conscious of information flowing into me. I can only liken my experience to some memorable statements of Swedenborg concerning influx of knowledge into the interiors of human understanding.

### THE PROBLEM OF CLAIRVOYANCE.

I should probably never in those early days have thought of such a problem as clairvoyance, had it not been for the surprising fact that what I saw perfectly other people did not see at all. I was first led to realize the unusual character of my vision when I mentioned the presence of the 'beautiful lady in white' to two persons who were with me when I saw her very distinctly, and they declared that we three were the only occupants of the apartment. The mystery of the fourth inmate was for me greatly intensified when it appeared to me that the other two persons, besides her and myself, could pass through her and she through them, while they appeared completely unconscious of each other's presence. An elderly lady with whom I was living, who was a devoted Churchwoman, summed up all my singular visions, when I related them to her, in the following words: 'Well, I can't account for it, but it must either be the work of God or Satan.' Though not many months over five years of age at the time to which I am now referring, I had already heard Satan called the 'father of lies' and had also been taught that truth belonged to God and came from heaven; so my youthful intellect was not perturbed with dread of any power of darkness, as I found that all the information which flowed into me when this beautiful spiritual being manifested to me was correct in every particular. I was, therefore, quite content to believe, with simple faith supported by reasoning, that my dear mother was watching over me as a guardian spirit. I often heard of guardian angels, and I was sometimes taken to a children's service in a church where a favorite hymn before the catechising began with the following invocation:—

'Dear angel ever at my side!  
 How loving must thou be  
 To leave thy home in heaven to guard  
 A little child like me'

Instead of conjecturing angels as well-nigh incomprehensible beings belonging to an order in the creation entirely different from ourselves, I rested satisfied with the simple, reasonable conviction that the messenger from unseen spheres who watched over me most intimately, was the dear mother whose physical presence had been withdrawn from earth long before I had reached an age when I could have consciously appreciated it. I do not forget the strange shock I felt when someone said to me: 'It is impossible that you should see your mother; you have no mother; she is dead.' Such vulgar, brutal words made no other impression on me than to set me thinking along psychic lines, far more often pursued by little children than adults generally suppose.

#### A GIFT OR A NATURAL ENDOWMENT?

It must be borne in mind that I was an isolated and often a lonely child, thrown very largely upon my own resources for amusement and enjoyment. This circumstance may suffice to suggest instructive thoughts regarding conditions singularly favorable to mediumistic development. Is mediumship a gift or a natural endowment? is a query often raised. To answer this inquiry it is surely necessary to recall the two distinct senses in which the word 'gift' is commonly employed. We speak of natural gifts, of the universal gifts of God to humanity, as well as of particular bestowments vouchsafed to those who are sometimes segregated in our philosophy from the 'common herd,' and designated a 'chosen few.' Having used the term 'clairvoyance' in connection with my own earliest spiritual experiences, I wish to define it in my own case as applying to extended vision of three distinctly different, though closely allied, varieties. The first evidence of my own clear vision, which came to me so spontaneously and unexpectedly that for a considerable season it caused me no astonishment whatever, related to beholding a form of real, consistent substantiality, existing on another plane of being than the one usually termed terrestrial. This form was completely and symmetrically human in every detail of outline, and was attired in artistic dress, not foreign to ordinary worldly convention, but vastly more beautiful and graceful than the customary mortal dress fashionable in the sixties of the nineteenth century, which included the crinoline and the chignon. The second evi-

dence of clairvoyance did not refer to sight, even on the psychic or astral plane, as sight is ordinarily understood, but to mental enlightenment or intellectual illumination, and this, not only of a general but also of a particular character, as the knowledge which entered into my understanding related not only to topics of usual information, but went deeply and precisely into manifold details of private family history, and included many revelations which brought great consternation to the hearers when I reported my experiences, seeing that the people among whom I was being reared were very desirous of hiding from me many facts connected with my parents of which my spirit mother undoubtedly wished me to become aware. The third feature in my clairvoyance was the actual predicting of coming events, and I use the term 'coming' in the precisest possible manner for the very events I was led to foretell had, in many instances, actually occurred in one sense, and were on their way to occurring in yet another. A single example will illustrate.

#### THE MYSTERY OF PROGNOSTICATION.

My grandmother's sister in Lincolnshire had decided to visit Sussex, but had not communicated her intention to anyone, though her mind was fully made up. Though I had never seen my great-aunt, and had rarely heard her mentioned, I distinctly saw her in the house where I was then living, and accurately described her appearance, even to the strings of the cap which she actually wore a few weeks later when paying her sister a visit. Two questions naturally arise at this point: First, how is it that we can see people who may be thinking of us, or perhaps only of a place we are inhabiting, when they are not consciously or deliberately projecting their thought, or an astral likeness of themselves, to us? Second, how is that we see articles of wearing apparel which those persons may not be actually wearing at the time when we behold them? The following reply may serve to elucidate, at least in part, the foregoing mystery. When Herbert Spencer many years ago criticised somewhat adversely the notion of clothing as pertaining to the spirit world, he evidently overlooked a very important consideration, to the effect that our clothing is all mentally designed before it can be physically confectioned. A new fashion in dress is impossible except as an out-



come of a new mental concept of apparel. Not only Swedenborg, but Shakespeare also, clearly illustrates the close connection which must ever logically exist between the wearer and the garment worn; and in no case do we find the suggestive doctrine more clearly taught by inference than in the play of 'Hamlet,' where the father of the Prince of Denmark appears in spirit, clad in armor, at the very time when he is seeking to inspire his son to make war against an uncle who has incurred the fierce displeasure of the discarnate king. Not only do we clothe ourselves physically in such raiment as becomes our immediate mental state, but we often unconsciously supply, gratuitously, portraits of ourselves doing things we intend to do, things, indeed, which we have spiritually already done, and which we shall certainly ultimate materially unless our plans are unexpectedly frustrated. It generally simplifies the mystery of prognostication if we do but consider that seership is a faculty which enables a seer or seeress to actually behold what exists on a plane of ultimatum prior to the physical.

#### AN EVENTFUL DAY.

As I grew from childhood to rather riper age, and in the meantime attended schools and became interested in many external pursuits and objects, my singularly spontaneous mediumship became less prominent, and with the exception of an occasional prophetic dream of rare lucidity, which always came as a needed warning, I gradually drifted into a more prosaic state of life, from which I was suddenly aroused by the presence of the world-renowned Cora L. V. Richmond (then Mrs. Tappan) in England during the seventies of the last century. When I was nearly fourteen years of age, and a member of a church choir, Mrs. Tappan greatly excited the population of Brighton, where I was then residing, by her marvelous discourses and poems, and singularly erudite replies to all kinds of questions, which she claimed were not due to her own erudition, of which she made no boast and to which she laid no claim, but to the action through her instrumentality of a band of guides who were ready to speak through her whenever their services were in demand. May 24th, 1874, was, indeed, an eventful day in my history, for though my public career as a lecturer and globe-trotter did not begin till nearly three years later, it was on the evening of that beautiful Whit-

Sunday that I experienced the first thrill of consciousness that it was my principal lifework to travel nearly all over the earth, guided by unseen but not unknown inspirers, who would carry me safely over all tempestuous oceans and protect me from all dangers by land if I would but be faithful to the mission entrusted to me by wise and kindly helpers. I have always greatly disliked the word 'control,' and I dislike it still, for in my ears it savors of coercion, and I have never been coerced by my inspirers, who have ever proved themselves faithful teachers, counsellors, and guides—veritable 'invisible helpers,' to use Leadbeater's felicitous expression, a title we may well apply to those numberless assistants who render multifold services to us of which we are often quite unconscious, but from which we derive inestimable benefit.

The record of my original introduction to the work of inspirational speaking is now an oft-told tale; in brief, I may sum it up as follows: When I was walking home after greatly enjoying Mrs. Tappan's wonderful eloquence, I registered a vow that if any good and wise intelligences in the unseen state would inspire me as they were wont to inspire the marvelous lady who styled herself their 'instrument,' I would most gladly take service with them and go whithersoever their counsels led me. I earnestly desired and confidently expected that inspiration would come to me if it were genuine at all, and come it did that very evening and within an hour from the time when I invoked it. Had no obstacles been placed in my way, I should have darted forth meteorically as a speaker before my fourteenth birth anniversary, but my legal guardian refused to grant permission until I was at least two years older, though she did not prevent my occasionally appearing at private gatherings, nor was she able to deprive me of some wonderful experiences of mesmeric or hypnotic character, which opened my eyes in my early teens to many of the marvels of psychology which are now demanding and receiving attention from distinguished savants the wide world over.

#### HYPNOTIC INFLUENCE AND SPIRIT CONTROL.

Hypnotism and its dangers, like Spiritualism and its dangers, is now being discussed at every turn, and I am often greatly interested to hear discussions on these recondite themes, when the debaters are people of experi-

ence, but whose experiences have been largely unlike my own. I do not presume to settle any question for my neighbors, I merely speak in the first person singular when I declare that I was never hypnotized against or even without the full consent of my own will; and as spiritualistic literature abounds with references to the virtual identity of hypnotic influence with spirit control, I deem it advisable to bear personal testimony in this connection. Shortly after my discovery that I could speak inspirationally, and even be spoken through by an unseen intelligence, to whose words, uttered through my lips, I could attend as a quiet, interested listener, I made the acquaintance of a brilliant young nobleman who was both an operatic singer and a practising psychologist. This young 'star' was introduced to me as desiring to conduct some delicate mesmeric experiments for which he needed the services of a lucide, or natural clairvoyant; or failing to discover anyone who would entirely answer to the above description, he considered it highly probable that his experimentation would be successful if he could meet a sensitive young person who was thoroughly willing to yield to his suggestive influence. My first ejaculation when the subject was broached to me that I might serve for the experiments, was 'I should be delighted, and feel sure they will be successful.' Though all the experiments were conducted in strict privacy, so far as the general public were concerned, many distinguished persons high in the learned professions took active part in many of the most satisfactory of them. It is not usually supposed, at least by the uninitiated into psychic mysteries, that the words passive and negative are quite as correctly qualified by the terms wilfully and willingly as are positive and active. We are frequently told that mediumship is impossible without passivity, and such is doubtless the case, but voluntary rather than involuntary passivity or negativity conduces to the most reliable results. Operator and subject are terms of double import, but such terms as sender and receiver or transmitter and recipient are clearly not open to valid objection, seeing that they in no way imply enforced surrender of one individual to another. During the nearly three years which intervened between my first insight into my capabilities as an inspired lecturer and my debut before a London audience, I had many opportunities for witnessing extraordinary phenomena, as I became well acquainted with many prominent Spiritualists, who

treated me with great kindness and consideration and placed many exceptional advantages at my disposal for witnessing manifestations of all varieties. Some of these appealed strongly to me, others did not. I had many opportunities for sitting in circles with Williams, Herne, Monck, Eglinton, and other extraordinary mediums, who, at about that time, were either in the inception or at the zenith of their fame. Though I was told repeatedly that I was a physical medium, and though I sat in many seances where tables moved and furniture in general behaved grotesquely, I never knowingly officiated as a physical medium, though planchette has worked for me repeatedly and automatic writing has been often with me quite an every-day occurrence. During the greater part of 1877-8, I was privileged to investigate the evidences of phenomenal Spiritualism all over England. The most private gatherings were open to me, and I was times without number privileged to sit with the most distinguished mediums under thoroughly satisfactory test conditions; but though I saw enough to convince me a thousand times over that some mysterious occult force was operating, and the spiritualistic hypothesis always seemed to me more reasonable than any other, I do not think, with my peculiar and naturally sceptical cast of mind, that I could ever have been completely convinced of the truth of spirit-communion had it not been for experiences of my own which absolutely forced me as a rational individual to accept the only sane conclusion.

### ON THE PUBLIC PLATFORM.

When I first took the platform I felt very much as I had often felt in more private places when voluntarily obeying the silently expressed dictation of the talented psychologist who could transmit to and through me any information he desired to convey when I was in a susceptible condition; but though he declared that I was perfectly his 'subject,' and I was quite willing to be such, I could not be induced by any professional mesmerist or practising physician, who was engaged in the conduct of hypnotic experiments, to receive or transmit anything, simply because I did not choose to make myself passive or susceptible. I remember well sitting on the platform in old Doughty Hall (a Masonic edifice no longer in existence) on Sunday evening, March 4th, 1877, and gazing out upon a large concourse of people gathered

to hear the 'kitten orator,' as I had been called because of my youth, discourse on a subject to be selected by their own vote. A hymn was sung to open a semi-religious service, and then I rose and offered a prayer, the words of which formed themselves in my mouth without forethought or conscious volition of my own. After a second hymn the presiding officer—the then celebrated James Burns, editor of the 'Medium and Daybreak'—announced in my hearing that the youthful occupant of the platform was prepared to discourse under inspiration on any theme the audience might think proper to select. I heard this without the slightest internal trepidation. I had become tense, callous, self-assured, but completely confident that an intelligence beyond my normal own would certainly render me entirely equal to the occasion. A subject was quickly decided upon by show of hands, and I rose to lecture. I spoke unfalteringly for fully an hour, and resumed my seat unexcited and unfatigued. A third hymn was sung, and then Mr. Burns called upon the audience to mention topics for an impromptu poem. Three or four subjects were given, and no sooner was a decision reached by the chairman as to which topic had received the greatest show of hands, than I rose for the third and last time that evening, and heard myself reel off a number of verses as easily and fluently as though I had them well committed to memory, though I am certain they were nowhere in print, and I was listening to them for the first time. The report of that memorable meeting created a great sensation twenty-five years ago; but events crowd thickly upon each other in these days, and a new generation has arisen since I was a 'youthful prodigy,' 'one of the marvels of the nineteenth century,' and much else, according to the newspapers, which I have long since forgotten.

Immediately after my appearance in London I was called to all parts of England. I went as an inexperienced child to places rough and smooth, aristocratic and uncouth, clean and dirty, refined and vulgar, religious and atheistic; and wherever I went I found my unseen prompters ready to help me in all emergencies and to pilot me safely over many difficult and unpleasant places from which I should certainly have shrunk had I seen beforehand what awaited me. During the nineteen months of my touring as a lecturer in England, between March, 1877, and October, 1878, I certainly saw the world in a large number of its varied phases, and though many

episodes in my career during that eventful period were extremely enjoyable, as I met kind and true friends almost everywhere, I could, without the slightest difficulty or exaggeration, unfold many a tale which might amuse or startle more than it would edify the listeners. My constitution was not considered naturally robust and I had to encounter many hardships from which many a stronger person would have fled in dismay, but though I cannot say that I quite enjoyed all the harsher features of my travels in all weathers to all sorts of places, instead of succumbing I grew steadily stronger physically as well as mentally, so that when I left England for America near the close of October, 1878, my constitution was quite equal to endure the strain of a singularly tempestuous, though not dangerous, ocean passage and the rigors of a New England winter, to the severity of which the fickle climate of Albion had never subjected me. I well remember my departure from Liverpool for unknown Boston across the wide Atlantic, whither I was journeying entirely alone save for the clearly distinguished presence of those faithful unseen helpers who never deserted me.

### CLEAR VISIONS.

One of the clearest visions of my life attended me during the night prior to my departure from Liverpool. I fell asleep about 3 a. m., apparently as a result of fatigue following upon intense excitement, but my seership asserted itself triumphantly in a manner which I was soon able to verify, even to the minutest detail. I saw myself standing on a wide platform which was covered with thick red carpet, in a great hall, with high windows on either side. There were an organ and choir gallery over the entrance to this audience room, and surmounting the rostrum on which I stood was a fine bust of the great New England preacher, the famous Theodore Parker. In that hall I saw a very large audience numbering from 600 to 800 persons; and in the midst of the assembly the dignified figure of Dr. J. M. Peebles, whom I had met in London some months previously, loomed large before me. The vision impressed itself indelibly on the tablet of my memory; then I fell into a dreamless slumber, which continued until I was called to partake of my last breakfast in England for many a year to come. On reaching America I found that not only had my advent been heralded in the columns of the 'Banner of Light,'

the oldest spiritualistic paper in the world, but the friend who met me at the landing stage (Robert Cooper, of Eastbourne, who was then a prominent worker in America) informed me that Dr. Peebles had just completed a lecture engagement in Parker Memorial Hall, and that he had announced me as his successor, the committee having accepted me for that large and prominent position on the good doctor's kindly recommendation, though I was only eighteen years of age and entirely unknown to the directors of the Parker Hall lectureship. No sooner had I landed in America than I was quite at home on what was in no sense to me a foreign soil, for there I heard the same language spoken, and, with minor exceptions of no definite importance, soon discovered that England and America are at least first cousins, if not still nearer relatives. In Boston my work quickly grew apace; then I was called to New York, Philadelphia, and other mighty cities, not excepting Chicago, where I filled Mrs. Cora L. V. Richmond's platform for an extended period, while she was filling an engagement in Boston. Nearly five busy years had sped their course when, in 1883, I found myself again in England, taking up afresh the work which I never laid down, but only temporarily suspended when I was led to cross the ocean and become a prominent worker in America. In 1884 I returned to the United States, and in 1885 again revisited England. During those years I accomplished a large amount of literary work in addition to extensive traveling and constant lecturing. In 1886 I visited California for the first time, and spent five delightful months on the sunny Pacific slope, in which charming country I addressed daily audiences often numbering many hundred persons, and saw wonderful results from the practice of mental healing, of which I had by that time become, and of which I still am, an uncompromising, though I trust not a fanatical, advocate and exponent.

#### A 'MIRACLE' OF HEALING.

At the close of a lecture which I delivered on a spiritualistic camp ground bordering on Lake Merritt, adjacent to the city of Oakland, California, a lady who had long been a cripple handed her crutches to her husband, walked home, and did not resume the use of artificial support subsequently. This 'miracle' of healing took place unconsciously to me, for I did not know there was a crippled woman in the assembly. I do not claim any

part in the accomplishment of this marvel further than to declare that I was led to say before I concluded my exposition of the philosophy of healing, 'You can use your limbs if you determine to use them, no matter how long they may have failed to serve you.' I had no idea that I was addressing anybody in particular, and no member of the audience was more greatly astonished than myself when the 'miracle' occurred. My explanation of it is twofold; I firmly believe that there was an influence at work with that afflicted woman beyond my consciousness, and I feel also convinced that through her own auto-suggestive act she greatly facilitated her recovery. This case is thoroughly authenticated, and is now in print in the supplement to my old standard work, 'The Spiritual Science of Health and Healing,' under the heading, 'Testimony of Mrs. Lily Bothwell.'

During that marvelous summer of 1886, which was in some respects the most astounding in my whole career, I received pressing invitations to visit Australia, from which far-distant land cablegrams came to me in quick succession. Nine years previously, at the very outset of my public work, I had been assured by my unseen preceptors that there was a great work for me to accomplish at the Antipodes after I had crossed America, and I may here mention that I had daringly announced in a London paper, in 1885, that I was going to California in consequence of a communication to that effect having been written through my hand when I had no earthly prospect of pursuing my westward way further than New York and Boston. My disappointment was singularly keen when obstacles arose, mountain high, to forbid my leaving America on the completion of my first season in California. Duty called me back to Boston, and reluctantly I obeyed its call, with heavy heart and doubtful mind, for I was beginning to suspect that my unseen directors had been in some way thwarted in their plans for me, I having been solemnly assured by them that I had a mission to fulfil in Australasia; and now that the way had plainly opened, the door had been ruthlessly closed and by no voluntary act of mine. On the way back across the American continent, when I paused to lecture in St. Louis, a message came to me with unmistakable clearness, 'You are going to Australia and New Zealand but not just yet! plans are ripening but not yet matured; have perfect confidence in your inspirers, for though there is a seeming delay there has been no hitch in the



arrangements.' 'But when shall I go?' I inquired eagerly. 'We cannot tell you just now; you would think the time too long did you foreknow its duration; but rest content; you are going, and you will fill a large place while you reside there.' With that assurance I had to remain content, for I could receive nothing further concerning the Southern Hemisphere though many directions were given me concerning my continuous work in the Northern. For ten years I saw nothing of England, and it was through the joint instrumentality of Lady Caithness, Duchesse de Pomar in Paris, and the special excursion of the World's Women's Christian Temperance Union from New York, in June, 1895, that I revisited Europe after ten years' unbroken residence in America. Those ten years had been very busy and highly eventful ones; my singular experiences during their highly chequered course would fill many a bulky volume. I had scoured America from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, and had met with warm receptions and enthusiastic audiences everywhere, though let no one imagine that a prominent public life means constant resting on a bed of roses; roses abound but thorns are often their intimate neighbors. I had produced a number of books, edited several periodicals, and contributed many hundreds of articles to magazines, besides having written thousands of letters to newspapers, in addition to musical work, before I again set foot in England after my departure in 1885.

#### A TELEPATHIC INCIDENT.

What first led me to turn my attention back to Europe during the winter of 1894 was a psychic or telepathic incident well worth repeating, though it has been previously recorded. I well remember December 8th, 1894. On that day, between 2.30 p. m. and 3 p. m., I was seated at a desk in New York writing an article for a periodical which demanded copy at short notice. I was scribbling away at full speed, writing 'against time' as literary hacks describe the process, when I was suddenly arrested by a vision of Lady Caithness, whom I had not seen for over nine years, seated at an escritoire in a sumptuously furnished boudoir, the most conspicuous feature of which was a magnificent painting covering nearly the whole of one side of the wall. This painting, which I saw distinctly in my vision, represented 'Jacob's Ladder,' and I remember being particularly impressed with the singular

beauty of the faces of the angels. Lady Caithness was elaborately dressed, and engaged in writing to me; it seemed as though I could see ink falling from her pen on to the paper, while she informed me of many interesting events connected with the erection of her ducal palace, 'Holyrood,' to which she had recently moved from the fine old house in an older quarter of Paris, where she had hospitably entertained me and where I had held several conferences during 1884-5. The letter she was then writing embodied the request that I should without delay contribute an article for a periodical she was then editing, and it also expressed a fervent hope that I should see my way clear to accept her offer of an engagement to deliver a course of lectures at 'Holyrood' during the ensuing June. For nearly thirty minutes this vision continued with me, and then, before the letter appeared finished, it suddenly vanished, and I resumed my interrupted article. I went to Boston for Christmas, and while there, on December 24th, I received, among other letters from New York, the identical letter from Lady Caithness, dated 'Paris, December 8th,' which I had beheld in my extremely vivid vision. In the course of the letter I learned that it was indited between 7.30 and 8.00 p. m., Paris time, which is five hours ahead of New York, and therefore the time coincidence was as nearly exact as it well could be.

#### THOMSON JAY HUDSON'S THEORY.

I have been repeatedly asked to describe the difference between telepathic and spiritual messages, and I frankly confess that I have rarely been able to clearly distinguish between them. And this statement suffices to introduce a consideration which is in my opinion a matter of great importance. Take, for example, Thomson Jay Hudson's much-discussed theory of two minds and two memories. Hudson avers that the subjective mind is the sole seat of the telepathic faculty, and in his three celebrated books, 'The Law of Psychic Phenomena,' 'A Scientific Demonstration of the Future Life,' and 'The Divine Pedigree of Man,' he industriously undertakes to prove that, though the objective mind with its memory may perish with the decease of the physical organism, the subjective mind with its memory continues to live on in the life of immortality. If this premiss is sound, then Hudson's conclusion, as put forth in his recent article (February, 1902) in the 'Era,' a well-known American monthly, is

quite unwarranted; and it is the height of absurdity on his part to declare that Spiritualists are 'fighting in the last ditch,' because recent experiments in the ample field of psychical discovery have abundantly proved the reliability of just such telepathy as Hudson and many others intelligently vouch for. My own experiences in numberless instances have completely satisfied me that in nine out of any average ten instances when psychic communion between friends can be clearly demonstrated, it is almost impossible to discriminate exactly between a message received from a communicant on earth and from one who has passed to the other side of existence. What, indeed, is that 'other side' but the side to which telepathy is indigenous? And can we afford to be sure that when we are functioning telepathically we are not behaving just as we should continue to behave were we suddenly divested of our material envelopes? If the physical frame be but a sheath or vehicle of the abiding entity, which is the true individual, then all these fascinating evidences of thought transference, or mental telegraphy or telephony, accumulating everywhere, are but so many convincing proofs of the reality of our spiritual nature in the here and now, which will prove continuous in the hereafter and the future. Evidences of psychic presence and spiritual guidance having attended my steps from infancy, I cannot specialize any particular season when I have enjoyed the greatest number of distinct proofs of super-terrestrial guidance, but such have always been most distinct and multiple when the need for them has been greatest.

I will now select, almost at random, a few notably striking instances of warning, guidance, and simply interesting seership, which stand forth prominently in my recollection as my thoughts revert to days gone by.

#### A WARNING VOICE.

Once in California, when I had arranged to lecture in a theatre in Los Angeles while I was yet in San Francisco, I purchased a ticket and secured a berth on a steamer leaving on a Thursday, and due at San Pedro, the port of Los Angeles, by noon next Saturday. It was summer weather and the coast steamers were almost invariably punctual to schedule time. Feeling perfectly sure that I should reach Los Angeles at least twenty-four hours before I needed to appear in the theatre, I felt no apprehension, after securing my tickets, as to fulfilling

my engagement, and therefore I was greatly surprised when, while walking up Market street, I heard a voice saying distinctly beside me, 'Change your ticket; go by train: boat will not arrive till Monday.' At first I paid no attention to this strange admonition, and was simply perplexed to account for its origin; but after it had been twice repeated I resolved to run no risk of disregarding a necessary counsel, and I therefore returned to the office where I had secured my passage and changed my tickets from boat to rail, despite the positive declaration of the booking agent that the boats were always on time, and that I could rely on meeting my engagement if I adhered to my first intention. Having procured a railway ticket in compliance with the urgent request of the unseen monitor, I mentally asked, 'What will cause the delay?' to which I received an answer, clairaudiently, with great distinctness, 'Accident to propeller; no danger, but vessel will have to return for repairs; it will arrive safely on Monday.' On arrival in Los Angeles on the Saturday morning, friends remonstrated with me for having forfeited a pleasant water journey at a season when boats were far preferable to trains in that vicinity; but I insisted that as I was announced to deliver two lectures on the following day it was imperatively necessary for me to arrive before the steamer, which I was certain would be belated. Saturday and Sunday both passed and no steamer arrived. I addressed two great audiences before the boat finally got in on the Monday morning, telling a tale of broken propeller and return to port of departure for repairs.

Another incident of quite a different character, but none the less phenomenal, even though less practically useful, concerned an acquaintance I formed in London in 1895, during a course of private midnight seances I was privileged to attend at which conditions were exceptionally fine. To accommodate the several professionals who were members of the circle, we assembled twice a week at midnight and continued our sittings till from 2 a. m. to 3 a. m. Our chief centre of attraction was a huge crystal placed in the centre of a large library table. The crystal was as large as an ordinary globe for containing goldfish, and into this brilliant object we all quietly but intently gazed, with a view to increasing concentratedness of thought and vision. After we had become susceptible to psychic vision we let our eyes close if they

seemed so disposed, and we described whatever came before us. Among a multiplicity of telling incidents connected with that circle, I remember describing accurately scenes then being enacted in a house in Brighton occupied by the parents and other relatives of a young army officer whose regiment was soon afterwards ordered to India. Some months later, when this gentleman was in Calcutta and I in New York, I saw him as plainly as though he were physically beside me, and on the occasion of his birthday, when some friends presented him with a handsome pair of ivory-backed military hair brushes on which his monogram was richly chased in blue and gold, I saw those articles as plainly as though he and I had been actually in a room together, inspecting the birthday presents. A letter which came to me from him a few weeks later described those brushes precisely and contained the words, 'I am sure you are receiving a telepathic despatch from me at this instant.'

#### SPIRITUALISM BASED ON TRUTH.

Though I have narratives to relate which would fill many a volume, all illustrative of the great question of psychic intercourse between friends yet on earth and those who have 'passed over,' as well as manifold descriptions of most convincing telepathy where both parties have been still incarnate, I must reserve for future opportunities the narration of other striking incidents. But now that I have just rounded out a full twenty-five years of public service, I feel it a solemn duty as well as a high privilege to bear unequivocal testimony to the always beneficial effect which mediumship such as I have developed has had on me from all standpoints. Mentally and physically I owe immensely much to those very endowments and experiences which mistaken people imagine are weakening to mind and body. That there are dangers and drawbacks I do not deny, but through all my varied and protracted experiences on and off the platform, for more than a quarter<sup>o</sup> of a century, I have invariably found that the directions given me from unseen helpers have been sound, elevating, and truthful to the letter in all particulars; while the telepathic incidents, at which I have scarcely more than hinted, have been always interesting, never mischievous, and invariably calculated to throw bright light on many a mystic problem. During the nearly two years which I recently spent

below the Equator, I have pursued my way unflaggingly and untiringly in all varieties of climate and in a great variety of surroundings. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to friends, seen and unseen, for the many tokens of their care and kindness which have brightened all my journeyings and rendered possible of accomplishment the widely extended mission which took me to the Southern Hemisphere. Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, and many smaller places in great Australia, I shall ever feel united with as centres of work which I know has already borne good fruit in numerous ways. Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch in picturesque New Zealand will always remain equally sacred in my memory. During all my Antipodean wanderings I found my psychic faculties fully as clear and as much in evidence as in other lands where the Southern Cross is an unseen constellation. I am now assured that my traveling days are not yet over, and that I still have oceans to cross, and continents to traverse, before I can honorably retire from active service, if such retirement shall ever be my portion. The dangers of Spiritualism are in my judgment greatly overrated, while its blessings are often minimized; for though I have been since 1890 a member of the Theosophical Society, and my acquaintance and connection with the Mental Science movement is a matter of public knowledge, I wish publicly, emphatically, and irrevocably to bear my testimony to the irrefutable truth of spirit communion. With the peculiar theories advocated by some Spiritualists I have no sympathy; and I daresay there are tricky spirits, as well as unreliable people on this side the mystic border; but though I must remain the 'free lance' I have ever been, and work wherever I am called to operate, and therefore cannot pose as exclusively a Spiritualist, inclusively I am as thorough-going an advocate of Spiritualism as any of its most enthusiastic representatives. I owe nothing to developing circles, and comparatively little to spiritualistic literature, or to phenomenal mediumship of an objective type; therefore my assurance of Spiritualism's central claim can never be weakened by any controversy which may rage concerning dubious phenomena. I have seen the unmistakably genuine, the ambiguous, and the fraudulent, and having seen so much I am prepared to testify to this effect, irrevocably—that Spiritualism is based on truth, and no matter how many barnacles may have to

be swept from such institutions as are devoted to its special advocacy, the twentieth century must and will witness a spiritual-revealing for which all the wonders of the nineteenth, stupendous though they have been, have only paved the way.

A hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Colville on the motion of the President, who said he had noticed with pleasure the evident gratification with which the company had, throughout, listened to the speaker's interesting narrative, and he had no doubt that the friends would be glad if arrangements could be made for Mr. Colville to continue his narrative at an early date. This suggestion was received with manifestations of cordial approval.





# THE QUESTION OF SPIRIT IDENTITY.

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## CONTINUED RECORD OF PSYCHICAL EXPERIENCES.

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Lecture delivered by W. J. Colville before the London Spiritualist Alliance, in St. James's Hall, Piccadilly, May 15th, 1902.

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The vexed question of spirit identity is one which is always liable to occasion considerable discussion, chiefly by reason of the fact that what appears thoroughly conclusive to some types of mind seems inconclusive to others. It is, therefore, necessary to approach this immense and vital subject not only entirely free from prejudice, but also fortified with clear understanding of the actual worth of the various theories now submitted for popular acceptance as substitutes for what is often termed the spiritualistic hypothesis.

A very friendly correspondent in 'Light' has recently asked whether it is possible for us to explain clearly how we discriminate between telepathic and spiritistic messages—to use the exact words of the courteous truth-seeker who raises the inquiry. Frankly, we admit that it is often quite beyond our present ability to discriminate completely between them, but this lack of ability always to discriminate, far from weakening the testimony favorable to simple Spiritualism, only necessitates a reconsideration of the entire problem of our human constitution before we attempt to formulate an inclusive theory to explain the entire bulk of our diversified psychic experiences. A very large number of thoughtful readers have been much impressed by Thomson Jay Hudson's three celebrated books: 'The Law of Psychic Phenomena,' 'A Scientific Demonstration of the Future Life,' and 'The Divine Pedigree of Man,' in which the hy-

pothesis known as the dual theory of the human mind is very fully and forcibly expounded. Professor Hudson, in common with many other able writers, labors to some extent under a burden of preconception adverse to Spiritualism, which often mars the beauty and consistency of his otherwise excellent literary work. The evidence for telepathy which this author puts forward is very strong and in some instances unimpeachable, but the alleged evidence against Spiritualism is rationally inadmissible, because it is of a singularly negative and supposititious character. We must face our problem bravely, not attempting to disguise the fact that during the past several years much evidence has accumulated in favor of simple telepathy which some over-enthusiastic Spiritualists may have been liable to undervalue because it has been erroneously supposed that, if accepted, it would tend against the interests of the cause which is nearest of all to their hearts. A better understanding of telepathy, and a fuller comprehension of what is logically involved in Hudson's 'two minds' theory, may serve to set many doubters at rest. We must not forget that the title of Hudson's second book is utterly misleading and an entire misnomer, if the evidences of telepathy prove communion between friends on earth but throw no light on the condition of those who have 'crossed the border.' The author persistently claims that of our two minds, which he consistently designates objective and subjective, the former perishes at the time of physical dissolution, but the latter lives on and finds a sphere for fuller and more perfect functioning than it ever enjoyed on earth. This theory accounts for telepathy as a sort of foretaste of the method of communion between friendly entities which will prevail unceasingly in the future life. The only flaw that we have been able to detect in Hudson's chain of reasoning is the poor opinion he seems to entertain of the moral integrity of the subjective mind, coupled with the utterly foundationless assertion that overwhelming evidence of unrestricted telepathy will drive Spiritualists, ere long, even out of that 'last ditch' in which they are now desperately fighting (according to Hudson) to save a lost cause and rescue a forlorn hope.

Reasonable identification of telepathy with direct spirit-communion, instead of introducing a new perplexity and further complicating an already complicated situation, introduces us for the first time to an orderly, har-

monious, and easily comprehended interpretation of many analogous facts and parallel experiences which have long perplexed the average student of psychic phenomena, though there have always been singularly luminous exponents of mental and spiritual science and philosophy, who have gone a long distance on the road which must lead eventually to universal understanding of man as a spiritual being.

We have frequently been asked to define clearly wherein consists the difference between a message received from a friend yet on earth, and a similar communication from one who has 'passed over.' Spiritualistic literature has largely been encumbered with two oft-repeated phrases, 'spirit return' and 'spirits coming back to earth.' These phrases are to a large extent misleading, for, though there are instances where such language may accurately and adequately describe the nature of certain manifestations, such expressions do not by any means correctly serve to describe the actual experiences of the great majority of seers and seeresses of ancient or modern times. Intromission to the spiritual state is a phrase full of deep significance, and, were it used more frequently, it would serve to elucidate many a problem of clairvoyance, clairaudience, clairsentience, and psychometry. Professors Denton and Buchanan, in their learned dissertations concerning psychometry, illustrated by numerous recitals of personal experience, have insisted that a true psychometer perceives the aura of an object, and can at times distinctly see into the spirit-world and become consciously en rapport with denizens thereof. Such quickened perception may fairly be considered as in some degree an anticipation of the means of intercourse we shall enjoy one with another when we have bade farewell to our robes of flesh.

If at this point we are reminded that the question of spirit identity is specially our theme at present, we may surely claim that if we are called upon to identify those intelligent beings with whom we are in communication, we must apply the same laws of evidence to this matter as to questions of individual identification when only mundane matters are involved. To identify a fellow-being in any world is not always easy, and indeed it often is found to be extremely difficult when we rely solely on outward tests. 'The hands are the hands of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob' is a vivid Scriptural instance of the extreme difficulty experienced

by an ancient patriarch in deciding which of his two sons was actually in his presence. The blindness of Isaac is easily typical of the condition in which most people are found when some sort of deception is successfully practised upon them. Evidences of two kinds are presented together. One set of evidences appeal to feeling, the other to intelligence. We judge people very often by outward appearances which we subsequently find to have been altogether deceptive, and if it be admitted in any degree that there are deceiving spirits who sometimes visit us, we are obviously placed in precisely the same position with reference to them as with regard to persons yet on earth who play us false because we are open to deception. The difficulties attending spirit identification are not necessarily greater than those surrounding the identity of persons who are yet encased in mortal garments.

No purely external tests are always valid. Indeed, to place extreme reliance upon such alone is to encourage swindling, and play into the hands of forgers who are usually very capable of simulating perfectly the outward garb of those they seek to personate. Testimonials, references, and letters of introduction constitute no infallible criteria, as these may all be counterfeit or stolen. The only sure way to identify anyone absolutely is by cultivating psychic perceptiveness, and this is more apt to be strongly developed in highly sensitive persons than in any others. Deception is, however, less likely to be practised on the spiritual than on the material side of existence, because the motive to deceive is far less strong. Expectation of worldly gain urges most deceivers on earth to ply their nefarious vocation, and it may be safely assumed that at least ninety per cent. of all deception would vanish from the earth if no financial or other ulterior gain could accrue from it. To palm oneself off as another would be objectless folly in which very few people would care to indulge did they not think they saw in such deception a means for self-enrichment or aggrandizement.

It may with some fairness be assumed that when communicating intelligences who display only very meagre intelligence profess to be very celebrated and illustrious personages, they may be hankering for the incense of adulation, but when no great names are given and no pretentious claims are made, it is difficult to see what reason could be fairly given for simply stupid masquee-

rating or deliberate misrepresentation of any sort. We know from experience that auto-suggestion on the part of the alleged recipient of a spiritual communication may account for some instances of falsification, especially when such self-deception tends largely to self-glorification or the gratifying of personal vanity. A great drawback to untainted spirit-communion is the prejudice and vanity of many sensitives, but this very foolishness on their part sometimes serves to reveal an aspect of truth which is frequently neglected, viz., that there may be perfect sincerity and frankness on the side of the unseen communicator, while the person to whom the communication is made may be the sole suggester of the deceptive element.

A lady in one of the Southern States of America declared that she was in direct communion with George Washington, the first President of the United States; but her friends as a rule laughed at her claim, because by means of automatic writing through the lady's hand, and by means of trance speaking through her lips, 'George Washington' expressed himself most ungrammatically and in negro dialect. On a notable occasion when 'George Washington' was speaking through this lady's mediumship, he was distinctly seen by a fine clairvoyant who had been invited to a seance, and at the conclusion of the address this seeress described what she had witnessed during its delivery, which was the presence of a very decided African of Ethiopian tint and cast of feature, and who appeared strongly attached to the lady through whose mediumship he had been able to deliver a lengthy message. On being requested to describe all she saw, the seeress went on to give particulars of a venerable old servant who had been named 'George Washington,' who had been a faithful retainer of the family prior to the Emancipation Proclamation issued in 1865, and had in that year steadily refused to accept his freedom, as he dearly loved the old estate and was devotedly attached to his master and mistress, parents of the lady through whom he was then able to communicate and whom he had often nursed during her earliest girlhood, ere he passed to spirit life, when she was not over eight years of age. That simple incident served to explain the entire problem, and it afforded a thoroughly rational explanation of a phenomenon belonging to a class, by no means uncommon in America, which have led to denun-

ciations of fraud where none existed—theories of wicked personating spirits, and many other vagaries of unbalanced judgment—to say nothing of the would-be clever remark made by people who were more ‘smart’ than wise, that it must be a terrible thing to die if in our post mortem condition we so quickly and sadly deteriorate. An instance like the foregoing will bear thorough sifting, and it is surely much easier to explain such an instance in the light of direct spirit communion than by straining an auto-suggestive or telepathic hypothesis to the breaking point to invent an improbable, in place of a probable, interpretation. Had the lady referred to suggested the matter to herself she would certainly have been fairly grammatical, as she was a comparatively well-educated woman, and not being a negress she would not have clothed an imaginary message from George Washington, as she conceived of him, in negro dialect. Admitting telepathy, mental telegraphy, or telephony, or aught else that is in any measure psychical, nothing can well be more likely than that a good old negro who had been for many years a faithful servant to the family residing on that particular estate, should seek an avenue of communion with it through the agency of a member to whom he had been greatly attached just before he passed into the realm of spirit.

It is doubtless true that many spirits leave the earth and all pertaining to it, very shortly after the demise of the physical body, while others remain closely connected with the scenes of their earth existence, not because they are earth-bound in the sense of being unhappy creatures who cannot, on account of their sensual vices, rise above the mundane level, but because their affections still cling to persons and places with which they have enjoyed pleasing associations up to the latest moment of their terrestrial existence. Andrew Jackson Davis, as well as Swedenborg, and many other gifted seers, have said much concerning the many spheres in this solar system encircling the various planets, which have often been numbered from one to seven, and then again divided and sub-divided into circles within circles, like wheels within wheels in Ezekiel’s visions; and those who have become strongly attracted to such teaching—and their name is legion—have brought forward the revelations of these prophets to disavow the declaration, made from a somewhat different standpoint, that multitudes of spirits can-

not return to earth as they have not yet taken their departure from this planet's immediate atmosphere, or even from the exact localities where a large portion of their earthly days were spent in work or amusements in which they took a decided interest.

While indulging in personal reminiscences, and not desiring to repeat a record of experiences already published and circulated, I will narrate a very recent instance of what seems to me clear evidence of spirit identity. When I was in Australia about eighteen months ago, in Sydney, I frequently employed the services of a bright, enterprising young man, who was an excellent typist, and to whom I dictated portions of several books and numerous magazine articles. Before taking my last earthly farewell of this young gentleman, on the eve of his departure for New Guinea, whither he went to occupy a post of trust and influence, he said to me that he hoped when I returned to England he might accompany me on the ocean, as he much desired, though by birth an Australian, to visit the Mother Country, which, though twelve thousand miles distant, is invariably called 'home' by Australasians. My reply was that though I could not definitely foresee my own plans for the near future, and could, therefore, promise nothing, I held myself in full readiness to fall in with his wishes should opportunity occur to favor the carrying out of the project. Shortly after his arrival in New Guinea in full possession of health, and seemingly of vigorous constitution, he caught the local fever, and in three days he had made his exit from the mortal body. I cannot say that he was very frequently in my thoughts, or that his loss would seem to me irreparable; still there was a link of sympathy between us which evidently made it possible for him to manifest his presence to me on more than one occasion during three distinct stages of my voyage from Sydney, via New Zealand and across America, to England. The first time he attempted to make himself known to me was between Sydney and Auckland, but as I was seldom alone during the four brief days that voyage occupied I cannot remember any very definite evidence of his identity, though I was fully conscious of his presence. The second visit which I know he made me was en route to California, when I had a large cabin to myself on the 'Sonoma,' and not being much acquainted with any of my fellow passengers I had many opportunities for quiet silence and uninterrupted meditation. I well remember

distinctly feeling the presence of my young friend with me, just as I had known him in Australia, and so real and tangible was the sense of that presence that it seemed exactly as though another person was sharing the cabin with me. I was quite awake, perfectly calm, and fully able to determine all he said to me, and yet I am certain I heard nothing with my external ears except the motion of the vessel passing through the water. Not only did I feel, or sense, his presence, but he gave me information concerning his situation in New Guinea, and the circumstances of his life there, which I subsequently learned, through correspondence with a mutual acquaintance, were correct in every detail. On the third occasion, when I as strongly realized his presence, I was nearing Plymouth on my voyage from New York last February, and on that occasion he gave me information concerning his present state and occupation, and told me several things in regard to my own near future, which have since been fully verified. Such definite, direct, and truthful communications certainly do not proceed from lying spirits, nor do they emanate from my own sub-self, whose reputation for veracity and sanity I am naturally interested to maintain; and when I speak a good word for my own subjective mind—which is to live hereafter when my objective mind has perished—I stand up equally for the corresponding sub-selves or subjective minds of all my neighbors. It is immeasurably more rational to maintain a reasonable spiritualistic version of such facts as I have just related than to invent, and uphold at all hazard, a contradictory and extremely complicated theory of the mysteries of telepathy, which serves to befog far more than to enlighten rational inquirers. In seeking to reply definitely to the very natural inquiry whether there is any marked difference in appearance between the psychic, or astral, body of a person yet on earth, and of one who has parted company with earthly raiments, I venture to suggest that only when the factor of clairvoyance is added to telepathy is this clearly determinable. Usually the appearance to psychic vision of one who has left the flesh is more ethereal than that of one who is still connected with it, but when only a sense of presence is realized, and intelligence is inwardly communicated, it is often impossible to decide whether the despatch in question is being received from a friend yet on earth or from one who is more frequently designated a 'spirit.'



Unnecessary difficulties in the way of rational spiritual identification are created by many persons who evidently mistake identity which pertains to abiding individuality for the most external incidences of ever-fluctuating exterior personality. Such questions are often raised as, 'If you see my father can you describe his appearance? does he wear a beard? how is he dressed?' and much else of the same almost ridiculous character. A little sober reflection must convince the veriest tyro that such questions, answered one way or another, cannot determine identity. We all know that fashions alter and habits change with wonderful rapidity, and it is by no means difficult for a man to remove a full beard in a few moments, or let one grow in a few weeks, thereby completely altering one aspect of his appearance. Black hair easily turns white, stout persons grow thin, and slender persons become stout, very frequently, while changes wrought by passing years and varying emotions frequently suffice to render old photographs, once speaking likenesses, no longer discernible, unless to the acutest students of physiognomy. It is, however, continually declared that clairvoyants see our spirit friends as they were when we last beheld them or as they appeared when we were most intimately associated with them. And such testimony, founded as it often is on actual fact, needs to be interpreted in the light of other knowledge than that obtainable by simple and often mysterious clairvoyance. Astral pictures are often beheld in the air of old houses, where certain people have lived long periods, and to which they have become greatly attached, and these psychic photographs are often mistaken for the actual presence of departed spirits by persons who rely on sight as evidence apart from feeling or manifest intelligence. A fact in my own experience may serve to illustrate two features of this portion of the subject of spirit identity.

Some years ago I was sojourning in an old country mansion in America, which had been the abiding place of a single family ever since its erection. The room assigned me as a sleeping apartment had, as I afterwards learned, been for many years the special working and reading room of a maiden aunt who had been quite a second mother to the family. In that room she had spent a great part of her time during her latest years on earth, and one of her favorite occupations was knitting stock-

ings by the fire. For four nights in succession, during my occupancy of that room, did I see that quiet elderly lady, with knitting in her hands, seated before a fire in the grate, which was at that season of the year filled with a summer ornament. At first I thought I must be actually in communion with the kindly, placid dame, and that she might have a message to convey through me to some member of the household; but, concentrate my thoughts and attention intently as I could upon the vision, I could detect no animation, nor could I receive even the faintest intimation of intelligence. The people with whom I was residing were not at all averse to Spiritualism, and when I told them exactly what I had seen four nights in succession in that particular bedroom, they all agreed that it was an exact description of their aunt, even to the smooth bands of brown front hair, and the cap with lilac satin ribbons tied under the chin; but they, in common with myself, wondered why, if I could see their aunt so clearly, I never saw her move and could obtain no impression of her intelligence. On the fifth night of my occupancy of that apartment I experienced a totally different sensation in connection with the same apparition, which I again beheld stationary and unresponsive as before; but on this occasion, hovering over the astral picture I beheld a radiant, youthful form bearing a certain family resemblance to the abiding simulacrum, but instinct with the fire and energy of active life and operating intelligence. Contemporaneously with this new additional experience, information clearly flowed into some receptacle of my consciousness, causing me to become aware that the original of the portrait desired her nieces and nephews to find in her old writing desk certain papers she had written long ago and which she desired should be revised, edited, and published. Following the minute directions given me by this guiding intelligence, I accompanied several members of the family to a lumber room in which many discarded articles of furniture had long been stored; and there among them stood an ancient escritoire, in which we found a completed story setting forth a romantic and highly edifying history of marvelous episodes in what the world would doubtless have looked upon as a secluded and uneventful career. After this startling confirmation of the veracity of my vision, we formed a private family circle for further investigation, and

thereat, by means of automatic writing, supplemented by clairvoyance, we verified many extraordinary statements made by this living relative of the family, who assured us that she was no longer sitting by a fire engaged in knitting, but most actively employed in spiritual occupations, which did not, however, alienate her in the least from her old associates but, on the contrary, kept her in close vital touch with all of them, though in a subtler and more ethereal manner than before she had quitted the material frame.

Another interesting experience of my own dates back only to the autumn of 1899, shortly before my departure for Australia. I had long known Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten, but my first interview with her was in 1877, at a lecture delivered in Manchester, when she was a middle-aged woman, dressed in much the same style as she continued to adopt till she finally withdrew from the public platform. Since her passing to spirit life, this earnest worker has occasionally made herself distinctly known to me, both on and off the platform, and in November, 1899, I distinctly saw, in connection with a most forceful realization of her close proximity, the likeness of a radiant maiden with light golden curls, somewhat resembling the earliest pictures of Mrs. Richmond when she was Cora Hatch, but in no way suggesting Mrs. Britten to me by the appearance. I never could have understood that vision had I not visited Mrs. Wilkinson (Mrs. Britten's sister), about a month later, and, while her guest in Manchester, been shown a picture taken many years ago, representing Emma Hardinge in youthful costume as 'Queen of the Fairies.' This picture represents the young lady who afterwards became Mrs. Britten with flaxen ringlets, and in every way precisely as she showed herself to me on the occasion of my vision. Had I suggested to myself a similitude of Mrs. Britten, I should certainly have conjured up from the depths of memory a likeness of her as I had known her; and when I interrogated her spiritually through the mediumship of automatic writing, subsequent to beholding the portrait at Mrs. Wilkinson's, the following message was communicated: 'I knew you were going to my sister's; therefore, I wished to give you a singular test of my identity, which I find I have succeeded in doing; and there is another reason why I showed myself to you thus— I wished to impress you with the knowledge that I can

now show myself in various forms to my friends, and my present appearance far more closely resembles that of my youth on earth than that of my later age.'

'How do we know each other here?' is quite as grave a question as 'Shall we know each other there?' I remember some years ago, in New York, being asked by a mutual friend to meet a gentleman who was returning to America after ten years' residence in Germany, and who was described to me from a portrait as a slender man with jet black hair. And such he doubtless was when he embarked for Germany, but during the decade of years he had spend in Europe, he had grown decidedly corpulent and his hair had become positively white. I nevertheless knew him by instinct, though I had never met him previously, and I accosted him by name, greatly to his surprise, directly he had left the steamer. Had I been slavishly governed by my physical senses instead of trusting to some surer and subtler faculty of discernment, I should certainly have failed to acknowledge him, so greatly did he differ in appearance from the description I had been given of him. We cannot expect that when we change in outward aspects thus rapidly on earth, we shall remain stationary in external aspect in the world of spirits. There is, however, this to be said concerning relatively fixed appearance in the life beyond. We are not there, as here, so greatly affected by outward climate, and outer appearance changes only as it indicates alterations in our interior state. Such is the unanimous and unfaltering verdict of spiritual testifiers wherever they have made their presence known.

And now, finally, concerning the weighing of evidence in the scales of reason. We may certainly maintain in the face of all opposition that every individual communication should be judged on its particular merits, and neither be accepted nor rejected on the merits or demerits of any other submitted message. We cannot believe, unless we part company with reason, that we are victims of stupid or wicked deception in cases where the teachings given are of the highest moral import, and where the information offered is proved correct in every detail as far as we can possibly verify it. The crude and intricate theories now afloat to discredit evidence of spirit intercourse are far more difficult and far less probable than the plain satisfactory conclusion long ago reached by all intelligent and dispassionate inquirers—that we do on many occa-

sions receive convincing proof of the identity of communicating spirits. In conclusion, let us look for an instant at the mental characteristics of a few of the typical students of psychic phenomena who during recent years have become thoroughly satisfied that in many instances, though not in all, proof positive of spirit identity has been obtained. Professor Hodgson and Mr. Myers were thoroughly satisfied at length, through Mrs. Piper's mediumship and that of other sensitives; and so were Miss Lilian Whiting and Rev. Minot J. Savage, as well as many other representative and cautious investigators. These famous persons had nothing to gain and possibly something to lose, by outspoken advocacy of Spiritualism; and in the case of Dr. Savage it is well-known that his tendency of thought was decidedly agnostic, and for many years during his popular ministry in Boston he was largely a champion and exponent of the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. It is difficult to see why people should prefer the Devil to their own friends who have passed beyond the mystic portals, and it surely cannot be easier for normal intellects to believe in imaginary evil demons, of whom we know practically nothing, except on unsupported hearsay, than in the presence and activity of the very people whom we have known on earth as real personages, and who reappear with their own well-known characteristics. Telepathy and all other demonstrable phases of psychic phenomena must be freely admitted by every student of psychic science, and it has now become the imperative duty and solemn privilege of all who have knowledge in this direction to elucidate as far as possible the truthful doctrine of the close resemblance and intimate relation of telepathy to Spiritualism. Simple telepathy throws much clear light on our present spiritual abilities, and spirit communion transcends mundane telepathic experience by carrying telepathy across the unseen border into those sympathetic realms of spiritual activity where the powers and functions of our 'sub-selves' or 'subjective minds' are more fully unfolded and more freely and extensively exercised than they seemingly ever can be during terrestrial embodiment. Let us be open to all classes of evidence, and construct theories to account for facts, but never seek to squeeze facts into grooves of premeditated theory.

Following the lecture, a number of questions were asked and answered. Among the replies the following were

conspicuous. The lecturer said, in reply to an inquiry concerning telepathic intercourse with spiritual beings who might be occupying positions in the solar system far remote from this planet's immediate atmosphere, that it was easily possible to hold communion with sympathetic intelligences without coming into local contact. It was also stated that intermediary intelligences often serve as connecting links between two spheres which have some measure of affinity with each other, though they cannot be described as actually near together. And the further declaration was made that space plays a far less important part than state in all spiritual interblendings. And it was yet further insisted that higher spheres can commune at will with lower planes of activity, but lower circles cannot rise into full conscious communion with higher circles except through such interior growth as proceeds from continued aspiration.

Regarding elemental and elementary spirits and the future existence of animals, the speaker said that this is a living universe; therefore, every element is in essence psychical. Life is everywhere, and all forms of animate existence are organized expressions of a universally diffused life principle. Magicians may command the lower forces of Nature and employ them in magical productions, but elemental influences cannot simulate human intelligence, at seances or elsewhere, any more than animals can speak with human voice or display such attributes as pertain only to the human species. Many clairvoyants have had some evidence of the temporarily continued existence of certain animals in the post-mortem state, but their actual immortality cannot be demonstrated.

In reply to a question concerning the likelihood of 'astral shells' producing the phenomena of Spiritualism, the lecturer argued with such decision against the supposition that galvanized reliquæ of the departed could display intelligence, and the utmost that could be rationally conceded to that theory would be the bare possibility—and that an improbability—that some human intelligence might use a 'shell' as a vehicle or utensil in the production of a phenomenon, but in that case the source of the manifestation would still be an intelligent entity.

Some ladies questioned the lecturer concerning the legitimacy or desirability of perpetuating such elementary

modes of spirit communion as table-tipping and other rudimental phases much in vogue in the early days of the Modern Spiritualistic movement, to which the following reply was given:

There is always a place for elementary phenomena, which are well adapted to the present requirements of many truthseekers who are as yet unprepared to appreciate or comprehend more advanced phases of psychic demonstration. For that reason it is far better to encourage than to discourage home circles and select friendly gatherings of congenial sitters, where the simpler forms of phenomena recur. Wherever two or three, or any larger number of friendly, harmonic persons unite to seek enlightenment, the response they win from unseen spheres is far more a result of their interior states of thought and feeling than of the method employed externally by those who are seeking to pierce the psychic veil. If the chief attention is always paid to aspiration, motive, desire, and all that constitutes the inner side of psychical investigation, the outward means employed may well be extremely diverse, to suit the varied needs of the great multitudes who are now knocking at the portals of the House of Wisdom.

Replying to a question concerning fraud practiced during seances, the lecturer said that during extensive travels in various parts of the world he had witnessed much genuine phenomena of many varieties, and also much that was ambiguous, but actual fraud was comparatively rare except in cases of persons who did not actually claim any mediumistic gifts when they were freely conversing with their cronies, and who undertook to simulate phenomena when they thought it would redound to their financial interest. Such persons, particularly in America, where they had been sometimes numerous, were turncoats in profession, for they invariably felt the pulse of a neighborhood and adapted their trickery to the largest prevalent demand. Many church officials had employed these tricksters to expose Spiritualism in one place, while they had quickly gone to another and posed as ardent Spiritualists and faithful mediums devoted to the cause of Spiritualism. It has been largely owing to impostors of that stamp that phenomenal Spiritualism has been at times under a heavy cloud and honest mediums have been exposed to assault and persecution. When phenomena are sometimes

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fraudulent though casually or frequently genuine, in the presence of certain public sensitives, something can be said in support of the plea that such mediums are sometimes greatly influenced by the immoral calibre of sitters, and being often not particularly strong morally in themselves, even when their sitters are not deceptive persons carrying a deceiving sphere with them, there is strong temptation to produce imitations of genuine manifestations when the demand for phenomena greatly exceeds the supply. The chief cause of fraud in America has been the insatiable demand of a voracious public for twenty or more full form materializations every night in the week at circles where a dollar per head has been the price of admission. It stands to reason that genuine phenomena of so marvelous a character cannot be doled out to order for just so much money whenever payment is forthcoming, and it is the height of folly to patronize and encourage such proceedings and then vehemently denounce the people who have only catered to a vociferous demand. A great deal of alleged fraud deserves careful, unexcited scrutiny, and it is not likely that fierce denunciation will ever effectually prevent it, as people will probably always be taken in more or less frequently until they have reached a plane of clear perceptiveness where they are no longer deceivable. Fraud may occasionally emanate from the spirit side of life, but that is an obscure problem and a remote contingency. Mind-reading and unconscious thought-transference will account for much seeming deception in connection with mental phenomena; but as this consideration opens a particularly wide field for psychological investigation, we should be extremely chary of condemning anyone without overwhelming evidence of guilt. Mediums certainly should not be prejudged unfavorably, and we cannot reasonably expect to remove deception by surrounding hyper-sensitive persons with a blighting atmosphere of suspicion.

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At the close of the proceedings a cordial vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Colville for his very interesting and instructive address.





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